

NARA's "Top 10" Principles for Plain Language

Plain language is clear, concise, organized, and appropriate for the intended audience.

1. Write for your reader, not yourself. Use pronouns when you can.
2. State your major point(s) first before going into details.
3. Stick to your topic. Limit each paragraph to one idea and keep it short.
4. Write in active voice. Use the passive voice only in rare cases.
5. Use short sentences as much as possible.
6. Use everyday words. If you must use technical terms, explain them on the first reference.
7. Omit unneeded words.
8. Keep the subject and verb close together.
9. Use headings, lists, and tables to make reading easier.
10. Proofread your work, and have a colleague proof it as well.

Promote a consistent One NARA voice by following the NARA Style Guide for guidance on usage, punctuation, capitalization, etc.

www.nara-at-work.gov/plain-language/